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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 003638

SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/20/2026

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: JANDARMA OFFICIALS SENTENCED TO JAIL TERMS, WILL
APPEAL

REF: A. 05 ADANA 207

[1](#)B. 05 ADANA 208

[1](#)C. 05 ADANA 222

[1](#)D. ANKARA 1899

Classified by acting Polcouns Charles O. Blaha; reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: A Turkish court on June 19 convicted two Jandarma officers and sentenced them to prison terms of 39.5 years each for their roles in the November 2005 bombing of a bookstore in Semdinli, Hakkari Province. Their attorneys will appeal the verdict. The court acted with unusual speed in issuing a sentence that contacts say is the longest ever meted out by Turkish judges to members of the security forces. Observers in the southeast praised the verdict, while noting that it remains to be seen whether the convicts will ultimately serve heavy jail terms. The bombing killed one person and wounded five, and sparked a series of violent clashes across southeastern Turkey. End Summary.

Court Reaches Speedy Verdict

[1](#)2. (U) A Van heavy penal court convicted non-commissioned Jandarma officers Ali Kaya and Ozcan Ildeniz of establishing a criminal gang, causing the death of one person, attempting to murder bookstore owner Seferi Yilmaz (who escaped the blast), and injuring others. One member of the three-judge panel favored life sentences for the defendants, but was outvoted by his colleagues. Attorneys for the convicted officers said they will appeal the verdict. Trial proceedings will continue for a third defendant, a Jandarma informant.

[1](#)3. (U) The court began proceedings in the high-profile case on May 4 and reached a verdict with unusual speed. Turkish courts normally hold one hearing per month on each case, and criminal trials normally take years. The court in this case scheduled hearings on consecutive weeks.

Longest Sentence Ever for Security Forces

14. (C) It is unusual for Turkish courts to sentence members of the security forces to lengthy jail terms. Genco Donmez, who tracks important court cases for the Human Rights Foundation, told us this is the longest sentence ever given to police or Jandarma defendants, a view supported by several attorney contacts. The reason, Donmez said, is that this is the first time a Turkish court has convicted security officials on gang charges, which carry a heavier sentence than charges for individual crimes.

15. (C) Turkish judicial officials normally release police and Jandarma suspects pending the outcome of their trials, though most other types of defendants are held in custody during trial. Authorities initially released the defendants in this case, but placed them in custody after attorneys and human rights activists protested the move. Kaya is reportedly being treated in an Ankara military hospital for an unknown illness.

16. (C) Some contacts, including attorney Orhan Kemal Cengiz, noted that security officials often serve far less time in jail than their sentences indicate. Judges often award police and Jandarma convicts with extensive sentence reductions for "good behavior," even in cases where they routinely fail to appear at trial. "If this had been the final ruling, they might have served 3.9 years instead of 39," Cengiz quipped. Donmez faulted authorities for limiting their investigation to the three defendants, failing to determine whether higher-ranking security officials authorized the bombing.

17. (U) Still, the ruling drew wide praise from observers in

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Turkey's predominantly Kurdish southeast. Yilmaz, the bookstore owner, told reporters he was pleased with the verdict, and said he hoped it would discourage similar attacks in the future. Esat Canan, Hakkari MP from the Republican Peoples' Party, who has been particularly outspoken about the bombing, said the ruling should serve as a warning to all public servants who think they are above the law.

Bombing Caused Widespread Unrest

18. (C) The Semdinli bombing sparked a series of violent clashes between demonstrators and security forces, in which five protestors were killed. At the time of the bombing, local residents caught the two Jandarma officials fleeing the scene. In the subsequent confrontation, a Jandarma sergeant opened fire on the crowd, killing one person and wounding several others. The sergeant is currently on trial in Malatya Province. That initial clash was followed by others in cities across the southeast. A number of contacts have cited the bombing, and its aftermath, as one reason for the increasing anti-government sentiment in the southeast (reftel D).

19. (U) The bombing also led to tensions between the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) government and the Turkish military. Military leaders were angered when the public prosecutor in Van Province named Land Forces Commander Buyukanit, who is in line to become Chief of the Turkish General Staff this August, in the indictment for the bombing. Some alleged that AKP was behind the indictment, though AKP leaders virulently denied involvement. The High Board of Judges and Prosecutors fired and disbarred the prosecutor.

Comment: Far From Over

¶10. (C) The speed of the trial, and the severity of the verdict, reflect the pressure on Turkish authorities to demonstrate that the Turkish judiciary is capable of prosecuting members of the security forces. Still, this case is far from over, and Turkey's track record gives cause to doubt whether the convicts will ever serve heavy jail time.

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